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ABSTRACT

This report presents the findings of several studies designed to examine students' coping processes in relation to stressful academic and social situations in the school environment. The setting for these studies was an inner-city intermediate school with approximately 423 students in the 1984-85 school year. Over 95 percent of the students were American-born Blacks; the rest were Blacks from the Islands or Hispanic. Major findings include the following: students' responses to the Academic Coping Inventory in two successive years revealed only very modest continuities in students' coping styles from year to year although there was considerable continuity in students' perceptions of stress level from year to year. This may suggest that coping is not a trait but a complex amalgam of thoughts and behaviors. For the groups of students at the extremes on achievement and perceptions of stress, some of the differences in coping styles showed more continuity. For example, there seems to have been a developmental trend toward more positive coping. Students' appraisals of their efficacy in socially stressful situations appear to have been more realistic than those in the academic context. Teachers saw higher achieving students as higher in positive academic and social coping behaviors. A number of gender differences in coping styles were revealed. Four statistical tables are included. (KH)

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STUDENTS' COPING WITH ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL STRESS IN AN INNER-CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Public Education Association

New York City

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of

the American Educational Research Association

Washington, D. C., April 22, 1987

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This research has been conducted in the context of an action-research project directed by Joseph C. Grannis of Teachers College for The Public Education Association and funded by The William T. Grant Foundation. The writer is indebted to Joseph C. Grannis for his many contributions to the research, to Wanda Bethea for her assistance with the data collection, and to the students who shared their thoughts and feelings.

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Students' Coping with Academic and Social Stress in an Inner-city Middle School

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This presentation will report on the findings of several studies designed to examine students' coping processes in relation to stressful academic and social events in the school environment. These studies took place within the framework of an action-research project on school stress directed by Joseph C. Grannis of Teachers College for the Public Education Association and funded by the William T. Grant Foundation.

Eighth grade students' responses to a self-report measure, The Academic Coping Inventory (Tero & Connell, 1984) were compared with their responses in the previous year to ascertain whether there were continuities or developmental trends in coping styles and whether there were differences by gender. Second-year responses to this measure were also compared for four status groups of students defined by differing perceptions of stress and levels of achievement.

Other perspectives on students' coping were obtained when a subsample of these eighth grade students was interviewed when they were in the seventh grade using a protocol designed by this writer. Responses to the interview were compared with teachers' responses to the Teacher Checklist of Student Behaviors (Fahs & Grannis, 1985) in an effort to determine whether students were perceived to be using the coping behaviors they reported.

A final perspective on students' coping was derived from responses to a sociometric measure called The Revised Class Play (Masten, Morison & Pellegrini, 1984) which has been used in other studies to identify high-risk and stress-resistant children. This measure was administered to most of the eighth grade sample when they were in the sixth grade.

Context and population

The setting for these studies was an inner-city intermediate school with approximately 423 students in the 1984-85 school year. The pool of subjects was students whose parents had given them permission to participate in the Project on Academic Striving during their sixth, seventh and eighth grade years. Over 95% of the students were American-born blacks; the rest were blacks from the Islands or Hispanic. A majority of the students had repeated at least one grade. In the spring of 1984, only 39.5% were reading on grade level or above and 75% were eligible for the free lunch program. The administrative and teaching staff was racially integrated.

During the years in which these studies were conducted, the overall climate of the school was very stressful. Because of yearly overestimation of the student body by the administration,

teachers had to be "excessed" and classes reorganized several times each fall. The resulting dislocation of teachers and students created a great deal of uncertainty and low morale and impinged on the project's ability to reduce the general stressor frequency in the school, although individual teachers and students benefitted from project support.

Measures

Coping with In-school Stress

The first instrument used to measure children's coping styles was The Academic Coping Inventory (Tero & Connell, 1984), amended slightly by the writer (Fahs, 1987). This self-report measure yields four dimensions of children's coping in response to perceived past academic failure: positive coping (problem-focused strategies), projection (blaming others), denial (avoiding or devaluing the outcome) and non-coping (anxiety-amplifying behaviors). A second measure, the Coping Interview, was designed by the writer (Fahs, 1987) to elicit in a more individual way students' coping processes. Students were asked about statements or thoughts they made or had during two preceding stressful events, one academic and one social, as well as what their appraisals of the events were (e.g., whether they thought they could change them or just had to accept them). Following the interview, each student completed an Endorsement Checklist (Fahs, 1987) consisting of a variety of statements of thoughts and behaviors. For the data analyses, only four of these statements were used: "I say it didn't matter" (denial), "I say the test (person) was not fair" (projection), "I say I'm just no good" (internal negative attribution), and "I say I'm as good as anyone" (internal positive attribution).

Perceptions of School Stress

The assessment of students' perceptions of and feelings about school stressors was determined by their responses to the two stressor subscales of Things that Happen in School, also called the Academic Environment Inventory (Grannis, 1983). These subscales were Stressor Frequency, the perceived frequency of potentially stressful events in the school environment, and Stressor Appraisal, how students evaluated these events. This instrument was developed especially for the Project on Academic Striving and has been described in detail elsewhere (Grannis, 1985; Grannis, 1987).

Teachers' Assessments of Students' Behaviors

Teachers' assessments of students' behaviors were measured by the Teacher Checklist of Student Behaviors (Fahs & Grannis, 1985). One hundred and eighteen students, including the 61 in the present studies, were rated by three teachers each (except three students for whom there were only two ratings). Twelve teachers, six male and six female, did the ratings; each student was rated by at least one male and one female teacher. The

resulting students' scores were entered on three separate data cards; and three factor analyses were performed. The factor matrix using principal factor with iterations yielded the best simple structure. In each set of ratings, two principal factors clearly emerged. All primary loadings ranged from .48 to .93. Three items had factor cross-loadings greater than half the primary loading (items 5, 18, and 25).

Insert Table 1 here

The first factor has been labeled "positive/cooperative" and the second factor "negative/aggressive." The total scores for these behaviors, excluding the ambiguous items cited above, have been considered global teacher ratings. Eight items were used for comparison of specific coping behaviors: Items 5, 6, and 7 were labeled positive social coping (positive coping in a socially stressful situation); items 8 and 9 were labeled positive academic coping (positive coping in an academically stressful situation); items 10, 11, and 12 were considered academic denial, projection, and non-coping, respectively. Students' ratings by the three teachers were averaged for the analyses.

Peer Assessment

The sociometric measure used to record students' assessments of their classmates was The Revised Class Play (Masten, Morison & Pellegrini, 1984). This measure contains 30 roles, 15 positive and 15 negative, which yield three dimensions, "sociability-leadership" from the positive items, "aggressive-disruptive," and "sensitive-isolated", the latter two from the negative items. Examples of the roles in the three dimensions are "Someone everyone listens to," Someone who picks on other kids," and "Someone who is often left out," respectively. The somewhat amended version which was scored for this study consisted of 14 positive items and 14 negative items (9 disruptive items and 5 isolated items).

As in the original administration, students voted twice, once for boys and once for girls; records were kept of boys voting for boys, boys voting for girls, etc. The number of votes received from students of both sexes was tallied for each student. These scores were then adjusted for unequal sex and classroom size distributions by dividing the raw scores by the number of students of each sex voting. For each student, nine scores were computed, scores from votes by both sexes separately on the three dimensions and three composite scores. The reliability of thse scores was examined by comparing how boys and girls voted for one sex or the other. When voting for boys, the correlations between boy-voters and girl-voters were $r(37) = .81$, $p < .001$ (positive score), $r(37) = .73$, $p < .001$ (disruptive score) and $r(37) = .78$, $p < .001$ (isolated score); when voting for girls, the cross-sex correlations were $r(22) = .46$, $p < .05$, $r(22) = .94$, $p < .001$, and $r(22) = .94$, $p < .001$, respectively. These correlations indicated good cross-sex reliability and were in line with the original

results (Masten, Morison & Pellegini, 1984), with the exception of the positive score for girls.

The original study with third through sixth graders in racially-mixed working class neighborhoods found intercorrelations between the three scores to be low to moderate, with those between the positive and disruptive scores being negative and those between the disruptive and isolated scores being positive. The intercorrelations between the positive and isolated scores were the strongest ($r = -.37$, $p<.001$). The intercorrelations between the three scores were rather different for the inner-city sample: All the scores were positively correlated, with positive and isolated being the weakest ($r(62)= .22$, $p.< 05$), the positive and disruptive next ($r(62)= .32$, $p<.01$), and the correlation of disruptive and isolated scores the strongest ($r(62)=.49$, $p<.001$).

In the elementary school study, peer-assessed "positiveness" was related to higher IQ scores, better achievement and more positive teacher ratings. Higher disruptive scores were associated with lower academic achievement but not with IQ; the isolated score was negatively associated with IQ, achievement and teacher ratings of classroom competence (Masten, Morison & Pellegrini, 1984).

Academic Achievement

The mid-year and final grade point averages, used as measures of academic achievement, were calculated by averaging the grades in four subjects, Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. These subjects were chosen because they were considered major subjects and, as such, were the only subjects taken by all the students in the studies.

Longitudinal Sample

The Academic Coping Inventory was administered in the spring of 1985 to 86 seventh graders and 91 eighth graders. The results of the comparisons of the coping subscales with students' perceptions of stress, personal attributes and academic achievement have been reported elsewhere (Fahs, 1987). In the spring of 1986, the Academic Coping Inventory was administered a second time to 61 of the 86 seventh grade cohort, 25 girls and 36 boys, most of whom were then in the eighth grade.

It is this subsample of 61 students (who had completed the Academic Coping Inventory in two successive years) which form the subjects of the studies reported in this paper. Of this group, 47 students (21 girls and 26 boys) were also rated by their teachers on The Teacher Checklist of Student Behaviors in their seventh grade year; and 47 students (21 girls and 27 boys) had been rated by their peers with The Revised Class Play in their sixth grade year. Thirty-one of this subsample (16 boys and 15 girls) were also interviewed by the writer in their seventh grade year. In the fall of 1984 and the fall of 1985, these students had also

reported their feelings about stressors in the school by completing Things that Happen In School.

Results

Continuity of Coping Styles

The comparison of the students' responses to the Academic Coping Inventory when they were in the seventh and eighth grades revealed modest correlations for the sample as a whole, with the exception of the non-coping subscale which was stronger ($r(61) = .46$, $p < .001$). The correlations were generally stronger for girls, again with the exception of non-coping, which was stronger for boys ($r(36) = .51$, $p < .01$ for boys and $r(25) = .41$, $p < .05$ for girls).

Insert Table 2 here

A comparison of the means and standard deviations of coping styles, perceptions of stressor frequency and academic achievement for boys and girls indicated no statistically significant differences for the two years or between boys and girls for the coping responses or stressor frequency. There were differences, however, in the final grade point averages, with the girls' being higher for both years.

Insert Table 3 here

Previous analysis (Fahs, 1987) of the responses of the total sample of 179 seventh and eighth graders revealed weak negative correlations between the projection subscale and final grade point average for the boys ($r(86) = -.14$, $p < .10$) and between denial and final grade point average for the girls ($r(92) = -.19$, $p < .05$). There were also weak positive correlations between positive coping and mid-year grades and final grades for the girls ($r(92) = .15$, $p < .10$, each time). In the current analysis, the only significant correlations between coping styles and final grades came in the second year between mid-year and final grades and projection for the girls ($r(25) = -.49$, $p < .01$ and $r(25) = -.57$, $p < .01$, respectively), with an opposite tendency for boys at the end of the year ($r(35) = .27$, $p < .10$).

A second perspective on students' coping styles was gained by interviewing four small groups of students defined by high and low perceptions of stress, the Stressor Frequency subscale of Things That Happen in School, administered in November, 1984, and high and low mid-year grade point average, taken from school records in February, 1985. (The criterion for defining status was the 75th percentile and above and the 25th percentile and below). Differences in the coping styles and personal attributes of the students ($n = 53$) in the four groups of seventh and eighth grade students have been discussed elsewhere (Fahs, 1987). Pertinent to the studies being discussed here are the data on the thirty-one students who were in the seventh grade at the time of the interviews.

Insert Table 4 here

The achievement levels of the four groups remained constant over the two years (e.g., those with higher achievement remained higher and those with lower remained lower). The higher stress groups reported less stress than in the previous year and the lower stress groups reported more stress bringing them closer together. In fact, in the second year there was no longer a statistically significant difference between the two high achievement groups in perception of stressor frequency. The high stress/low achievement group remained higher in stressor frequency than the two original low stress groups. In the first year, the high stress/low achievement group reported more projection than all the other groups; in the second year it reported more projection than all groups but the other low achievers. The low stress/low achievement and the high stress/ high achievement groups reported higher coping than the other groups; the low stress/low achievement group also reported higher denial than all the other groups, except the other high copers. Both of these tendencies were reduced in the second year. The high stress/low achievement group also reported higher non-coping than the higher achieving groups in the first year, but in the second this tendency was only greater than that of the low stress/high achievement group.

The students in these four status groups were also the ones who were interviewed by the writer. Nearly all the students, regardless of status group, reported making at least one positive coping self-statement at the time of a stressful academic event. All but three indicated that they thought they could change the event (which, in most cases, was "not doing well on a test"). Students in all groups were far less sanguine in their appraisals of socially stressful events in school: 63% of Groups 1 and 2 felt they could make changes while only 33% of Group 3 and 20% of Group 4 felt that way.

Comparisons of Students' Self-Reports of Coping and Teachers' Assessments of Students' Behavior

Positive academic appraisal (e.g., telling the writer that they could change the stressful academic situation by "studying harder" or "asking the teacher for help") was not correlated with teachers' ratings of students' academic coping (items 8 and 9 on the Teacher Checklist of Student Behaviors). Similarly, there was no correlation between the students' appraisals in the socially stressful situations and the teachers' rating of their social coping (items 5, 6 and 7). On the other hand, there was a strong correlation between teachers' rating of positive social coping and students' reporting of positive coping self-statements in socially stressful situations ($r(12) = .60$, $p < .05$).

Neither students' reporting of positive coping on The Academic Coping Inventory nor endorsing the checklist statement, "I say I'm as good as anyone," in academic situations were related to

teachers' rating of positive academic coping behaviors. Endorsing this checklist statement in socially stressful situations was, however, strongly related to teachers' ratings of positive academic coping for boys ($r(14) = .72$, $p < .01$) but not for girls. This finding was paralleled by the correlation between positive appraisal in social situations and teachers' ratings of positive academic coping behavior for boys ($r(26) = .44$, $p < .05$) for boys but not for girls. Feeling inadequate (i.e., endorsing the checklist statement, "I say I'm just no good") in stressful social situations was also negatively related to teachers' ratings of positive academic coping ($r(14) = -.52$, $p < .05$) for boys but not for girls. When a regression analysis was done to determine other possible factors contributing to teachers' positive ratings of students, it was found that boys' positive appraisal of their social efficacy contributed 79% ($p < .01$) of the variance, after 29% ($p < .10$) for standardized reading score. (For girls, this social appraisal contributed nothing). Finally, the positive global score derived from teachers' ratings of behavior were significantly related to final grade point average for the 1985 seventh and eighth grade sample ($r(52) = .81$, $p < .001$ for boys and $r(58) = .67$, $p < .001$ for girls) and for the 1986 subsample ($r(30) = .57$, $p < .001$ for boys and $r(22) = .62$, $p < .01$ for girls).

Not surprisingly, the students in the two status groups with higher achievement (Groups 1 and 2) were viewed by teachers as using more positive academic coping and less academic projection, denial and non-coping than those in the groups with lower achievement. They were also seen as using more positive social coping and less social projection. The mean positive and negative global teacher ratings for the two higher achieving groups showed no differences among them but both were significantly different from the lower achieving groups in the expected directions. (See Table 4).

Comparisons of Students' Self-Reports, Peers' Assessments and Teachers' Assessments

The final perspective to be presented on children's coping with in-school stress was derived from the sociometric measure, The Revised Class Play, administered to the subsample when the students were in the 6th grade. How students assessed their peers was compared with how students saw themselves in the seventh and eighth grades and how they were assessed by teachers. It should be noted at the outset, however, that all analyses with peer assessments must be viewed with much caution because the number of students was small; and students without project permission participated in the assessment but were not part of the final tabulations and analyses. (In other words, all the students present in a class on the day of the instrument administration participated in the voting for the entire class roster but only the votes for the project participants were included in the analyses. Five students, four boys and one girl, who received high disruptive scores were not in the project as well as one girl with a high positive score.)

Correlational analysis of the scores on The Revised Class Play and students' responses to the Academic Coping Inventory for boys showed a negative correlation between the isolated score and self-reported positive coping in the seventh grade ($r(37) = -.42$, $p<.01$). There was also a positive correlation between the isolated score and self-reported denial in the seventh grade ($r(37) = .22$, $p<.10$ and in the eighth grade ($r(24) = .51$, $p<.01$) and between the disruptive score and denial in the eighth grade ($r(27) = .31$, $p<.10$).

The correlations were quite different for girls. A positive peer score in the sixth grade was negatively associated with both self-reported positive coping ($r(18) = -.54$, $p<.05$) and self-reported non-coping ($r(18) = -.60$, $<p .01$) in the eighth grade. Girls' disruptive scores were negatively associated with self-reported denial in the seventh grade ($r(22) = -.45$, $p<.05$); girls' isolated scores were negatively related to self-reported projection in the seventh grade ($r(22) = -.48$, $p<.05$).

There were also gender differences in some of the correlations between the peer assessments and the interview checklist statements. There was a tendency for boys, but not for girls, who felt inadequate in social situations to have low positive peer scores ($r(9) = -.48$, $p<.10$) and high isolated scores ($r(9) = .94$, $p<.001$). Girls who viewed themselves positively ("I say I'm as good as anyone") in the academic context had low disruptive scores ($r(13) = -.48$, $p<.05$) but boys with similar attitudes had high disruptive scores ($r(16) = .44$, $p<.05$).

Final analyses compared teachers' assessments of students' coping behaviors and students' grades with the peer assessments. For boys with high positive peer scores, there were negative correlations with teacher-assessed denial ($r(29) = -.34$, $p<.05$), projection ($r(29) = -.38$, $p<.05$) and non-coping ($r(29) = -.34$, $p<.05$, all in the academic context. There was also a positive correlation between positive peer score and the positive global teacher score ($r(29) = .38$, $p<.05$). There were no correlations between teacher assessments and positive peer assessment for girls. For both boys and girls considered disruptive by peers, there were negative correlations with teacher assessments of positive social coping ($r(29) = -.32$, $p<.05$ and $r(19) = -.34$, $p<.10$, respectively) and positive correlations with teacher ratings of projection in social situations ($r(29) = .36$, $p<.05$ and $r(19) = .41$, $p<.05$, respectively). For girls viewed as disruptive by peers, but not for boys, there were positive correlations with teacher assessments of denial and non-coping in academic situations ($r(19) = .43$, $p<.05$ and $r(19) = .41$, $p<.05$, respectively). For girls, but not for boys, with high isolated scores, there was a negative correlation with the negative global teacher assessment ($r(19) = -.40$, $p<.05$).

There were no correlations between final grades in the seventh and eighth grades and peer-assessed positive or isolated scores for boys or girls. There were, however, strong negative correlations between the peer assessment of disruptiveness and

final grades in the eighth grade for both boys and girls ($r(29) = -.35$, $p<.05$ and $r(19) = -.65$, $p<.01$, respectively).

Students with high positive peer scores were found in all four of the status groups; but the two students with outstandingly high positive peer ratings were in the low stress/high achievement group. The highest percentage of students with high disruptive scores were found in the two low achieving groups, with slightly more in the high stress/low achievement group. Students with the highest isolated scores were found in the two high stress groups, with no differences for level of achievement.

Discussion

The results of the analyses of students' responses to The Academic Coping Inventory in two successive years to determine whether there were continuities in students' coping styles from one year to the next revealed only very modest correlations, except for non-coping behaviors which were stronger. In general, girls' coping styles showed somewhat more stability than boys.' There was no continuity in the relationships between coping styles and academic achievement. In fact, a strong negative relationship between final grades and projection aaaappeared at the end of the eighth grade for girls, with a weaker opposite tendency for boys, where neither had been evident in the previous year.

This lack of continuity can not be explained by different levels of stress in the two years, for there was considerably continuity in students' perceptions of the frequency of stressor events. The mean levels of stressor frequency reported remained virtually the same and the correlations between these variables in the two years were fairly high: $r(33) = .64$, $p<.001$ for boys and $r(22) = .66$, $p<.01$ for girls. The lack of consistency in the students' reported coping attitudes and behaviors is probably explained better by the theory that coping is not a trait but a "complex amalgam of thoughts and behaviors" and that people are not necessarily consistent across situations over time (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980: 221).

For the groups of students at the extremes on achievement and percpetions of stress, some of the differences in coping styles showed more continuity: The high stress/low achievement group continued to report higher projection but non-coping diminished. The low stress/low achievement group continued to report higher denial, but no longer significantly greater than the others. There seems therefore to have been a developmental trend towards more positive coping. It should be noted that the Academic Coping Inventory, which was used for the first time with an inner-city junior high school sample proved to be insensitive in measuring students' positive coping (Fahs, 1987). Responses to the positive coping subscale appeared to be influenced by social desirability and were therefore not reliable indicators of students' positive coping.

While the interviews proved to be a more sensitive methodology for obtaining information on students' positive coping, social desirability appeared to still be a factor in the students' academic appraisals (e.g., telling the writer that they could change the academically stressful situation by "studying harder" or "asking the teacher for help"). One is also reminded of the finding that both successful and unsuccessful high school students reported using appropriate school skills but only successful students are observed to actually use them (Kerr, Zigmond, Harris, and Brown, 1985). Students' appraisals of their efficacy in socially stressful situations appear to have been more realistic than those in the academic context. In the appraisals of social situations, however, academic achievement appeared to be an important factor: 63% of the higher achievers made positive appraisals of their ability to handle social stressors while only 27% of the lower achievers did.

The association between positive social appraisals and achievement was seen again for boys but not for girls in the correlations between teachers' ratings of positive academic behavior and boys' positive social appraisals and feelings of being "as good as anyone" in social situations.

A related finding is that students, both boys and girls, in the higher achieving status groups were seen by teachers as higher in positive academic and social coping behaviors and lower in negative coping behaviors than low-achieving students. In fact, the teachers' global ratings of students' behavior, particularly positive behavior, were more strongly associated with achievement as measured by final grade point average than any other factors in this study ($r(26) = .90$, $p<.001$ for boys and $r(21) = .80$ for girls between positive global ratings and 1985 final grade point average; $r(26) = -.86$, $p<.001$ for boys and $r(21) = -.78$, $p<.001$ for girls between negative global ratings and 1985 final grade point average). One must conclude that students' grades were very much affected by teachers' assessments of their behavior. It is important to note that the boys' global negative scores were significantly higher than girls' and their global positive scores significantly lower. When one also remembers that the girls' grades were consistently higher than the boys' grades in spite of similar standardized reading and math scores (Grannis, 1985; Grannis, 1987; Fahs, 1987), one sees the detrimental effect of deviance from expected behavior on school achievement. As discussed elsewhere (Grannis, 1985), the norms of school behavior required at this age may be more difficult for boys than girls to attain. The particular disadvantage of inner-city black boys in the school setting has been discussed by others (e.g.,Hare, 1985). It is this writer's belief that much more thought needs to be given to changing school structures and teaching/learning modes so that boys' energies and responses are productively engaged rather than used against them.

While the earlier sociometric study (Masten, Morison & Pellegrini, 1984) found high correlations between how girls and

boys saw their elementary school classmates, some interesting differences by gender appeared in the intermediate school sample. There was quite substantial agreement between boys and girls on which boys had positive qualities (cross-sex correlation of $r(37) = .81$, $p < .001$). The agreement on the positive scores of girls was considerably lower ($r(22) = .46$, $p < .05$). There was also a tendency which did not reach the level of significance for the mean of girls' positive scores to be higher when girls were voting for girls than when boys were voting for girls. Interestingly, there was also an insignificant tendency for the mean of the boys' scores to be higher when girls were voting for boys as well. Additionally, positive peer score in the sixth grade was negatively associated with self-reported positive academic coping (positive coping subscale of the Academic Coping Inventory) in the eighth grade for girls. A break-down of the peer score showed that the correlation was much stronger when boys were voting ($r(22) = -.63$, $p < .01$) than when girls were ($r(22) = -.33$, $p < .10$). Boys' and girls' views of leadership qualities appear to become more divergent in teenage.

The comparisons between student peer-assessments and self-assessments yielded some other interesting relationships. Confirming earlier findings, boys, but not girls, who felt inadequate in social situations had lower positive peer scores and higher isolated scores. Further, boys who viewed themselves positively in academic situations were viewed also as disruptive by peers while girls were viewed in the opposite way.

Finally, there were moderate and parallel correlations between positive peer and teacher assessments for boys but not for girls. For both boys and girls who were viewed as disruptive, however, there were negative correlations with teacher assessment of positive social coping. For the sample as a whole, there was a weak correlation between final grade point average in the seventh grade and peer-assessed positive scores. There were negative correlations between peer-assessed disruptiveness and final grades in the eighth grade. Unlike the findings in the elementary school sample (Masten, Morison & Pellegrini, 1984), there was no correlation between peer-assessed isolated scores and academic achievement. The correlations between achievement and positive peer scores were weaker and those between achievement and disruptive scores were stronger than in the elementary school study. It should be noted, however, that in the elementary school study comparisons between sociometric ratings and academic achievement were made with data collected in the same year. In this study, the sociometric ratings were compared with final grades in the two succeeding years.

Because of the small size of the sample being reported on today, it would not be appropriate to generalize the findings to other populations or contexts. Yet, the consistency of some of the findings, collected at different times from different sources-- the students themselves, their peers, and their teachers--leads one to speculations that should be explored further. The writer is drawn back to the correlations between

students' appraisals of social efficacy in the school environment and academic achievement. Especially for boys, coping well with the social stressors in school and feeling in control socially (both self-reported and teacher-reported) were associated with higher achievement. Many studies on school reform have noted the importance of more active participation and of responsibility and control by students (Dorman, 1981; Rutter, Maugham, Mortimer & Oustan, 1979). Yet, in most of our junior--and senior--high schools control by administrators and teachers remains the norm and, often, the expressed goal. Even now, discussions about reforms needed to stem the tide of students' dropping out of school focus primarily on making the school climate more intimate and caring and/or the academic curriculum more relevant. Little is heard about increasing students' responsibility and control in the school environment.

I believe that we must begin to pay attention to what students are telling us about themselves and their peers. These students seem to be telling us that they need help in negotiating the social as well as the academic aspects of school--and that the social structure of school must change to accomodate their developmental needs.

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Table 1

Teacher Checklist of Student Behaviors: Averaged Factor Loadings

Item	Factor 1 Positive	Factor 2 Negative
During instruction, this student		
1. distracts certain other students		.84
2. gets distracted by other students		.87
3. joins in general class disruptions		.88
If another student wants to fight, this student		
4. gets into a fight		.76
5. defends him/herself verbally	(.30)	.53
6. moves away from the situation	.63	
7. comes to you/another adult for help	.63	
If this student does not do well on a classroom test, s/he		
8. asks you for explanation/other help	.72	
9. studies harder for the next test	.81	
10. acts as if it didn't matter		.79
11. gets mad at you or others		.74
12. seems to give up		.74
This student comes to class with		
13. paper and pencil	.84	
14. appropriate textbook or other materials	.84	
15. This student follows classroom rules and teacher requests	.86	
16. This student pays attention to lessons and directions for assignments	.84	
When this student has a homework assignment, s/he		
17. does it at home	.83	
18. does it at school	(.52)	(.52)
19. does it on his/her own	.82	
20. completes the assignment	.85	
21. does the assignment correctly	.81	
22. This student feels good about him herself	.69	
23. This student takes responsibility for his/her own actions	.83	
In interation with others, this student is		
24. considerate	.84	
25. assertive	(.42)	.49

Note: Factor cross-loadings with magnitudes greater than half the primary loading are shown.

Table 2

Correlations between Students' Responses to The Academic Coping Inventory in 1985 and 1986

	Total Sample (N=62)	Boys (n=37)	Girls (n=25)
Positive Coping	.29**	.23*	.35**
Projection	.28**	.25*	.33*
Denial	.27**	ns	.34**
Non-coping	.46****	.51***	.41**

* p<.10. ** p<.05. *** p<.01. **** p<.001.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations and Significant t Values for Comparison of Boys and Girls

	BOYS (n=36)		GIRLS (n=25)	
Variable	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Positive Coping 1985	3.5	(.5)	3.6	(.4)
Projection 1985	2.0	(.6)	2.0	(.6)
Denial 1985	2.2	(.7)	2.0	(.6)
Non-coping 1985	2.6	(.6)	2.5	(.8)
Positive Coping 1986	3.3	(.6)	3.5	(.4)
Projection 1986	2.0	(.7)	1.9	(.6)
Denial 1986	2.1	(.6)	1.9	(.5)
Non-coping 1986	2.4	(.6)	2.4	(.6)
Final GPA 1985	71.4[a]	(11.7)	77.7	(9.7)
Final GPA 1986	72.9[b]	(10.1)	77.8	(8.3)
Stressor Frequency 1985	29.5	(5.4)	31.0	(7.1)
Stressor Frequency 1986	29.9	(5.9)	28.7	(6.2)
Negative Teacher Rating	42.5[c]	(16.1)	31.2	(10.7)
Positive Teacher Rating	114.7[d]	(39.3)	145.8	(26.0)

a $t = -2.3$, $p<.05$, two-tailed test
b $t = -2.0$, $p<.05$, "
c $t = 3.3$, $p<.01$, "
d $t = -3.2$, $p<.01$, "

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations and Significant t Values ($p < .05$) for Comparison of the Four Status Groups defined by High and Low Stressor Frequency and Mid-year Grade Point Average

	Group 1 Hi STRF/Hi GPA (n=8)		Group 2 Lo STRF/Hi GPA (n=8)		Group 3 Hi STRF/Lo GPA (n=10)		Group 4 Lo STRF/Lo GPA (n=5)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Positive Coping 1985 [a]	3.6	.5	3.3	.3	3.4	.6	3.8	.3
Projection 1985 [b]	1.9	.7	1.8	.6	2.4	.6	1.9	.6
Denial 1985 [c]	2.1	.9	2.1	.5	2.1	.7	2.6	.1
Non-coping 1985 [d]	2.3	.8	2.0	.9	3.0	.6	2.5	.5
Positive Coping 1986	3.6	.4	3.2	1.0	3.5	.4	3.6	.4
Projection 1986 [d]	1.8	.5	1.8	.5	2.3	.5	1.9	.6
Denial 1986	1.8	.5	2.0	.6	2.2	.7	2.3	.3
Non-coping 1986 [e]	2.4	.5	1.9	.7	2.5	.4	2.3	.2
Final GPA 1985 [f]	79.6	6.6	86.3	8.8	66.6	7.0	59.0	6.5
Final GPA 1986 [f]	78.7	5.9	81.0	16.9	67.9	7.3	60.1	11.6
Stress Freq 1985 [g]	36.1	4.8	23.4	1.4	35.9	4.1	22.6	2.9
Stress Freq 1986 [h]	28.1	5.1	24.6	4.3	33.6	6.0	26.6	3.5
Neg Tcher Rating [i]	27.1	3.8	30.0	9.2	51.2	15.5	60.2	14.4
Pos Tcher Rating [f]	156.0	14.5	154.8	20.7	96.8	29.6	82.8	28.3
Acad Coping (TR) [f]	3.8	.2	3.4	.7	2.3	.9	1.8	.7
Soc Coping (TR) [j]	2.8	.4	2.5	.4	2.3	.5	2.1	.2
Acad Proj (TR) [i]	1.6	.3	1.6	.3	2.1	.8	2.5	.5
Soc Proj (TR) [i]	1.3	.6	1.5	.5	2.3	1.0	2.7	.8
Acad Den (TR) [i]	1.0	.1	1.2	.3	2.5	.7	2.9	1.1
Acad Non-cop (TR) [i]	1.0	.1	1.3	.3	2.4	1.0	2.7	.6

a Groups 1 & 4 higher than 2 & 3
b Group 3 higher than all others
c Group 4 higher than 2 & 3
d Group 3 higher than 1 & 2
e Group 3 higher than 2
f Groups 1 & 2 higher than 3 & 4
g Groups 1 & 3 higher than 2 & 4
h Group 1 no longer higher than 2; but 3 continued higher than 2 & 4
i Groups 1 & 2 lower than 3 & 4
j Group 1 higher than 3 & 4; Group 2 higher than 4